

## PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF FEMALE *ALLORA MAJOR* ROTHSCHILD (LEPIDOPTERA: HESPERIIDAE) AT IRON RANGE NATIONAL PARK

FRANK PIERCE<sup>1</sup> and GEOFF WALKER<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PO Box 121, Kangaroo Ground, Vic 3097 (E-mail: [jmandfp@bigpond.com](mailto:jmandfp@bigpond.com))

<sup>2</sup>2/88 Dalny Rd Murrumbena, Vic 3163

### Abstract

A female *Allora major* (Rothschild, 1915) was photographed at Iron Range National Park on 28 June 2014, the first such record from the Australian mainland. The photograph also documents interesting male behaviour.

### Introduction

*Allora major* (Rothschild, 1915) is known in Australia only from Iron Range, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland (Braby 2000, 2004). On 27 and 28 June 2014, specimens were observed while on a 10 day expedition to photograph butterflies in Iron Range National Park.

On 28 June, both a male and a female were observed and photographed (Fig. 1). The male was subsequently netted. This is the first published record of a female of *A. major* from the Australian mainland.

### Observations

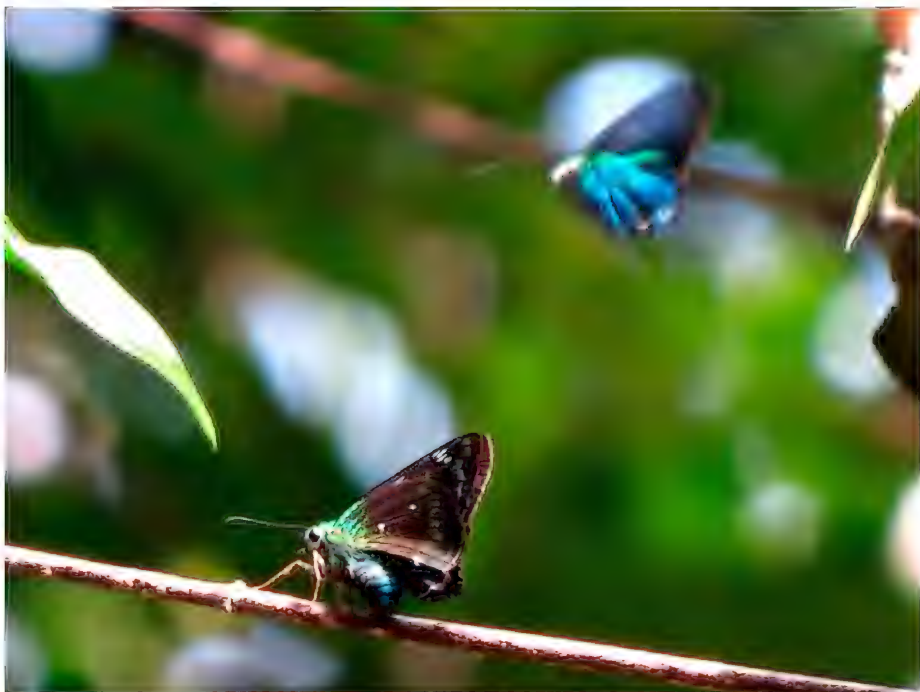
On 27 June 2014, while searching the roadside at 12.7266S 143.2847E (ca 1.6 km south of the Rainforest Camp Turnoff), an *Allora major* was seen in ascending flight at approximately 1030h. We recognised it by its larger size and greater colour intensity than *Allora doleschallii* (C. Felder, 1860), which was observed in similar ascending flight at another site 8 km north of Coen on 24 June 2014.

On 28 June 2014, at 1020h at the first location, two specimens of *A. major* were observed flying high in the canopy. One then perched on a horizontal section of vine about 6 m above the ground; the other was flying around in close proximity just above it. FP photographed the specimens while GW went to collect net extensions.

FP took seven photographs, including that shown in Fig. 1, after which both butterflies flew along the roadside to the north, descending to 1.5 m above ground level, just as GW was returning. GW gave chase, the butterflies turned and began flying to the south, and he managed to catch the male.

Fig.1 was taken with a hand held Canon Powershot SX50HS compact digital camera set at x42 optical zoom (equivalent 35 mm focal length of 1024 mm), with shutter speed of 1/40 second, ISO of 200 and aperture of 6.5.

Further photographs of both the female and the male are provided on GW's website at: <http://australianbutterfliesphotographed.com/>



**Fig. 1.** Female *Allora major* with male hovering above – photographed at Iron Range on 28 June 2014.

### Discussion

From Fig. 1 it is obvious, from the body size, that the stationary butterfly is a female. The photograph shows the series of subapical spots on the forewing underside and the subapical spot on the hindwing underside, which distinguish it from the similar *A. doleschallii* (Braby 2004). The third distinguishing feature, the white subternal patch on the forewing underside, cannot be seen but the netted male had this consistent with *A. major*.

The female is evidently probing the substrate, either laying eggs or testing its suitability for oviposition. The male is clearly exhibiting courtship behaviour. Since he was netted, we cannot be sure what the outcome of this interaction might have been had the butterflies been left undisturbed, but it seems likely the female was unreceptive and was exhibiting an escape response.

Braby (2000) noted that ‘The females are not known from Australia’ and there have been no records of a female on the mainland published since 2000 (Cliff Meyer, Grant Miller and Peter Valentine pers. comms. July 2014).

### References

- BRABY, M.F. 2000. *Butterflies of Australia: their identification, biology and distribution*. 2 vols. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood; xx + 976 pp, 70 pls.
- BRABY, M.F. 2004. *The complete field guide to butterflies of Australia*. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood; x + 340 pp.